

The Postcolonial Algerian Novel: The Struggle for Identity and Self-Affirmation (Nawar al-Lawz by Lusini al-A'raj and The Madman's Will by Ismail Yabrir): A Comparative Study

Zineb Bouhla²

Abstract:

The narrative of identity and the celebration of Algerian distinctiveness are defining features of a broad corpus of Algerian fiction, endowing these novels with an expansive sense of identity in which diverse artistic, intellectual, and cultural references intersect—all tied to the values of self-affirmation and cultural grounding. From the 1970s through the twenty-first century and up to the present day, modern and contemporary Algerian fiction has sought to embody, describe, analyze, and document the events and transformations experienced by Algerian society, within an enduring dialectical relationship between the Self and the Other. This dynamic stems from the political and social legacies of colonialism and the class divisions it left among ordinary citizens, extending to the intellectual and ideological rifts among the elite. Taken together, these novels chronicle a persistent quest for identity and self-affirmation—whether in a narrow context, through the internal conflict between those in positions of authority and the various social classes, or among social groups themselves, or in a broader context, through confrontation with the Western “Other,” a conflict that takes on religious, cultural, and linguistic dimensions.

Introduction

Cultural studies is a branch of literary research whose primary focus includes postcolonial themes, which emerged as a reaction among the intellectuals of colonized peoples, who provided a true picture of colonialism by analyzing the discourse it produced—particularly literary discourse, which sought to portray colonized peoples in a manner contrary to reality in order to justify colonialism by constructing an imagined or false intelligence-based image of peoples and nations, thereby justifying the continued presence in these countries.

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² Ph.D. in Arabic Literature, Zian Achour University, Djelfa, Algeria. E-mail : Zineb.bouhlal@mail.univ-djelfa.dz

In response to what has been mentioned, another discourse emerged—the postcolonial discourse—which resulted from a new way of thinking through which intellectuals and thinkers engaged with their heritage and homelands. This discourse served as the basis for a response to imperialist centralism; those who fall under the “Third World” classification and countered with a new discourse based on undermining and refuting Orientalist writings through evidence and argument. Among the most prominent of these was the critic Edward Said, who argued that “it is necessary to trace the political implications of a text by reading a culture that returns criticism to the world, for the text is a cultural event that must be linked to manifestations of political and cultural life”

This theory also seeks to deconstruct and undermine a series of central dichotomies such as: the self and the other, the East and the West, the center and the periphery, and Orientalism and Westernization (counter-Orientalism).

Building on the above, postcolonial Algerian fiction has constituted an important and prominent narrative field in documenting the events and hardships experienced by society during the revolution and after independence; its writers have sought to expose and address the legacy of colonialism on culture, language, education, and political, economic, and social life. Algerian fiction has also addressed the life of Algerian society throughout the decades following independence, including the reforms, setbacks, and contradictions of that period: such as the nationalization of the oil industry and the agricultural revolution, the emergence of class divisions, the issue of education, and the conflict between Arabization and Francophilia—all set against the backdrop of the Algerian individual’s struggle to find himself and his identity, and to define his relationship with his society and homeland, while maintaining his connection to his language, religion, and culture.

This is what creators have focused on in their novels through the protagonist’s suffering, his heroic deeds, and his pride in his national, cultural, and religious identity.

From this, we pose a series of questions:

- How did the postcolonial Algerian novel emerge and take shape, and what themes did its writers explore and excel in? Algeria has been a fertile ground for the emergence and excellence of this literature, given the end of the colonial era there.
- How has Algerian narrative addressed the issue of identity (the search for the self) and its relationship to society after independence?
- How is the “other” represented in this narrative, or more precisely, what is the image of the “other” in the eyes of the “self”?
- And how do these two novels portray the self and the other—in what ways do they agree, and in what ways do they differ?

Hypotheses:

- The emergence of postcolonial literature in Algeria can be traced back to the colonial era and Francophone writings that exposed colonialism in its own language, such as the novels by Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Feraoun, and Malek Haddad.

- Postcolonial narrative in Algeria emerged as a means of correcting the course and reviving the thought, culture, and identity of these peoples who had been colonized for so long.
- Readers of post-independence Algerian novels will notice that they are based on the conflict between the self and the other, beginning with the works of Mohamed Dib and his first trilogy (The Algerian Trilogy).
- Postcolonial narrative shifted toward fantastical realism and critical realism, marking the beginning of transformations in creative writing.

Algerian writers sought to construct a new artistic theory in their writings, inspired by the conditions Algeria experienced after independence, ((amid differing circumstances in which the conflict over principles receded, giving way to an intensified struggle over the reaping of gains)) (Al-Khatibi, 2009, p. 68).

In this study, I adopted **the descriptive approach, which includes analysis among its methods**, as it is the most appropriate for this type of study.

This was carried out according to a methodological framework consisting of an introduction, five main sections, and a conclusion.

Theme 1: Postcolonial Theory (Concept and Origins)

Section Two: The Algerian Postcolonial Novel

Section Three: Algerian Narrative and Issues of Post-Independence Society

Section Four: Aspects of Identity and Their Analysis in Late 20th-Century and 21st-Century Novels (The Search for Transformation and Difference)

Theme 5: The Self and the Other in These Two Novels

Theme 1: Postcolonial Theory (Concept and Origins)

1- The Concept of Postcolonial Theory

There are numerous definitions of postcolonial theory—also known as postcolonialism or postcolonial discourse—but in summary: it concerns the study of literature written during the period of independence that expresses the affirmation of the identity of peoples liberated from colonialism and their self-reconstruction and self-reformation.

Among the concepts of postcolonial theory is what **“Hafnaoui Baali”** mentioned in his book ***An Introduction to the Theory of Comparative Cultural Criticism***, defining it as ((studies that examine the cultural relations between the West, as the colonizer, and non-Western countries that fell under colonial rule, along with the analysis of literary and other texts contained in those studies, to reveal their discursive strategies)) (Baali, 2009, p. 74). We understand postcolonialism to be a comparative cultural-critical study that examines the imperialist or Western-centric view of the East.

In his book ***Writing Back***, **Bill Ashcroft** states that postcolonialism refers to “the effects of the colonial process on cultures and societies. The term came into use after World War I to refer to the period following the attainment of independence by formerly colonized countries.” By the end of the 1970s, critics began using it when discussing the various cultural effects resulting from the colonial process” (Ashcroft et al.,

2001, p. 331)). Here, it refers to the negative effects that colonialism left on the cultures and societies of the countries from which it emerged.

Douglas Robinson states: “((Here, the term ‘postcolonial’ refers to our late-20th-century perspective on political and cultural power relations, while the historical period it covers is all of history))”.

It is clear from the preceding concepts of the terms “colonial discourse” and “postcolonial theory” that there is often an overlap between the two terms, as **Saad al-Bazai and Mihan al-Ruwaili** explain in their book **The Literary Critic’s Guide**, where ((These two complementary terms refer to a field of analysis that is not new in and of itself, but whose theoretical and methodological contours have only recently become clear in the West, as interest in it has intensified and studies on the subject have increased. **The first term** refers to the analysis of cultural products developed by Western culture across various fields that express colonial attitudes toward regions of the world outside the Western sphere, on the basis that these products collectively constitute an intersecting discourse in the sense used by Foucault for the term “discourse.” **The second term**, “postcolonial theory,” refers to another type of analysis based on the premise that traditional colonialism has ended and that a phase of hegemony—the imperialist phase—has ended, giving way to different conditions that call for a specific type of analysis. Therefore, the two terms stem from opposing perspectives regarding the interpretation of history, although this difference lies in the details rather than in the essence)) (Al-Rubli and Al-Bazai, 2005, p. This means that they are opposing discourses in terms of their origins and orientations: the former focuses on analyzing what Western culture has produced and expresses colonialist attitudes toward the East, whereas postcolonial theory is a movement opposed to the first discourse, incorporating what the East has produced to undermine Western conceptions of the East.

2- The Emergence of Postcolonial Theory

This theory emerged and developed amid the collapse of European empires during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. It underwent several developments and transformations over different time periods, as ((Postcolonial studies emerged from a complex history of responses—mostly British and Indian—to both colonialism and its decline in the 20th century, influenced by a series of radical Western thinkers (“Karl Marx,” “Friedrich Nietzsche,” “Louis Althusser,” “Frederick James,” “Jacques Derrida,” “Michel Foucault,” and “Edward Said”), who challenged traditional assumptions regarding knowledge)) that is, before this theory took shape in its current form as research in critical literary and cultural studies, there was a revolt on the part of these scholars.

Postcolonial theory has gone through several stages and phases, including prospective historiography, nationalist historiography, and postcolonial historiography. “Postcolonialism”

Some critics trace the earliest beginnings of postcolonial studies to the critique put forward by the great thinker Edward Said in his book **Orientalism**. Said argues that colonial histories, which tell us much about the relations of hegemony between the “East” and the “West,” produced discourses of the colonial “Other” and were, in turn, themselves the product of a number of such discourses; The East is constructed as something to be understood through linguistic metaphors and similes that reproduced relations of hegemony; indeed, hegemony became a natural condition of the colonized world rather than the result of geopolitical power in and of itself)) (Lumia, 2013, p. 7) We find that this “colonial Other’s” writings on the East stem from a long history of domination over its lands; for him, the East is a world to be discovered, distorted, and filtered through the lens of the West via Orientalist writings.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that postcolonial discourse was academically established through the efforts of Edward Said; however, one cannot deny the contributions of other scholars and critics whose works had a clear influence on Edward Said's writings, serving as a powerful stimulus and motivation for him. Among them was **Franz Fanon**, with his revolutionary and liberationist ideas. Fanon is considered a defender and activist for the rights of colonized and oppressed peoples through his writings aimed at ridding society of all forms of subjugation, slavery, oppression, and injustice—all in order to reestablish his identity, nationality, and self-affirmation.

One of the most important objectives of postcolonial discourse is to analyze colonial discourse and elucidate the degrees of synergy between "culture and colonialism," for the colonial presence is not self-affirming or self-justifying; rather, it is compelled to resort to a complex set of premises in order to affirm and justify itself following every disruption in its relationship with the Other. Thus, the project of postcolonial writing has sought to interrogate European discourse and rhetorical strategies in their position between two worlds, and to scrutinize the means that enabled Europe to impose and maintain its discourse in the context of its subjugation of three-quarters of the world's current population))(Bin Al-Waleed, 2008, p. 3); that is, the obliteration and suppression of the cultures of colonized nations through cultural invasion and misleading writings is another form of colonialism—and the most effective one at distorting the realities of the peoples of the East and their heritage. Postcolonial discourse emerged as a counterforce to and a challenge of European discourse, analyzing it and undermining all its tenets with evidence and argument.

3- Areas of Postcolonial Studies

Among the concerns of postcolonial studies that are central to our topic are

- The defense of national and ethnic identity:

Postcolonial theorists and intellectuals rejected assimilation into Western civilization and criticized policies of exclusion, marginalization, and central hegemony; they also rejected alienation and domestication. ((Instead, they called for an authentic national culture and advocated for a unifying national identity, Among them were writers and creators of the African Black movement, who harnessed all their cultural and scientific resources to confront Westernization. They clung to their Black identity and defended their African Black existence, using French mixed with national languages." (The goal of postcolonial theorists and intellectuals was to seek out particularity, national identity, and nationalism by fighting against central hegemony and refusing to be absorbed into it.

- The Relationship Between the Self and the Other:

Postcolonial theory is based on a discussion of the relationship between the self and the other in light of postmodern approaches—such as the cultural approach, the Marxist approach, the new historical approach, and the political approach—all aimed at understanding the interactive relationship between the self and the other: Is it a negative dialectical relationship or a positive one?

The Second Theme / The Algerian Postcolonial Novel

The field of postcolonial studies gained prominence during the 1980s and 1990s, and the term "postcolonialism" became a designation for a theory in cultural studies and literary criticism. Narrative is considered one of the most important discourses that formed the core of postcolonialism in confronting and responding to colonialism during the colonial period, especially with the demise of traditional colonialism.

As **Ashcroft** and his colleagues state in their description of postcolonial literature, it ((It primarily refers to types of literature that have transcended their distinctive regional character and sought to reflect their experience with colonialism to highlight the existing tension with imperial powers and affirm their divergence from the assumptions of the colonial center, which is what distinguishes them as postcolonial.)) Postcolonial literature has focused on writing about the colonial experience, exposing its realities, and conveying the voices of these nations to the outside world.

1- The Francophone Novel and Its Role in Establishing a Postcolonial Narrative

We find that our country, Algeria, is among the Third World nations that suffered under colonialism for periods lasting well over a century, and its writers have excelled in depicting the colonial era and the hardships endured by the people, especially during the liberation revolution. Although the Algerian novel emerged relatively late, in 1970, it has devoted significant space to the revolution and its events, the heroism of the mujahideen, and the crimes of the French colonial army. ((Thus, the novels written after 1970 reflect the concerns of the Algerian people during their days of resistance against colonialism. It is worth noting that Algerian novelists have created works in both Arabic and French—a challenge to the colonizer that has earned Algerian fiction international recognition and transcended Arab boundaries. Among these creative figures is the late **“Mohamed Dib.”** He is considered a pioneer of writing and creativity within the framework of postcolonial theory, which raises a number of thorny issues, including the dialectic of the self and the other and the conflict between them. Readers and scholars of Mohamed Dib’s novels observe that his works are based on this conflict between the self and the other, beginning with his first trilogy (the “Algerian Trilogy”), which coincided with the liberation revolution and represented the phase of revolutionary realism, through to those works published during the postcolonial era; the phases of fantastical realism and critical realism marked the beginning of shifts in the author’s creative writing, which highlighted the extent of his liberation from traditional forms of expression, revealing an artistic vision inspired by the circumstances Algeria was experiencing at the time amid shifting conditions in which the struggle over principles receded, giving way to an intensifying struggle over material gains, culminating in the novel **Habil** and his “Northern” writings, which marked a turning point in his creative journey on all levels)) (Al-Khatibi, 2009, p. 69). It is well known that the actual establishment of the Algerian novel in 1970 coincided with radical social and cultural changes brought about by the early stages of state-building, ((Thus, the socialist orientation led the formative novels to address the ideological conflicts that characterized the revolution between the nationalist current, which adhered to Arab-Islamic values, and the current steeped in Marxist thought. Although many Algerians linked in their writings the events of the revolution with those that occurred after independence, Each from their own ideological perspective, the constant is that the revolution remained the ideological and artistic reference point from which most Algerian novelists drew their inspiration)) (Salgouqa, 2000, p. 48). This ideological conflict was reflected in education between advocates of Francophonie and advocates of Arabization.

Let us not forget that the Francophone Algerian novel emerged during the colonial era, and many writers excelled in this genre. In 1948, two novels were published: the first, titled **Idris**, by Ali al-Hamami, and the second, titled **Labik**, by Malik Ben Nabi. It is worth noting that among the most important novels that marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Algerian novel—one that addressed the reality of a people who had endured oppression for many years—was **The Big House** by Muhammad Dib, published in 1952, which describes the oppression and widespread hunger resulting from the occupation. followed by the novels **The Fire** (published in 1954) and **The Loom** (published in 1957), which are considered

extensions of *The Big House* and express the suffering of other segments of the population, such as urban workers and artisans, and peasants enslaved by the colonizers in the countryside))

Mohamed Dib's novels are pioneering in their depiction of the condition of the Algerian people (the "self") and in exposing the colonial "other" through the language of the colonizer itself, thereby achieving international acclaim.

Many novels have followed in its footsteps, including *The Sleep of the Just* by Mouloud Mammeri, published in 1955, which depicts the misery and deprivation experienced by tribal villages and hamlets, and the novel *Najma*, published in 1956, in which Katib Yassin addresses the exploitation and injustice perpetrated by the colonizers against the people of the homeland and depicts the massacres of May 8, 1945, during which the colonizers brutally suppressed demonstrators demanding freedom and justice)) Writers continued their creative work in the postcolonial era, including the novel *Children of the New World* by Asia Jebbar, published in 1962, and the novel ***Opium and the Stick*** by Mouloud Mammeri, published in 1965

2- The Pioneers of the True Founding of the Postcolonial Algerian Novel and Its Most Important Themes

The same approach was adopted by novels written in Arabic, as novelists embraced realism in their treatment of historical events. Among these is *Al-Laz* by Tahar Wattar, considered one of the foundational novels, in which he sought to convey to the reader the resistance of the rural population against the French colonial army, while simultaneously depicting the battles of the Liberation Army; It is a novel whose events are embodied through the actions of its characters. *Al-Laz*'s portrayal of the Algerian Revolution from the inside reflects the author's daily experiences and his political and social awareness of the events, crises, problems, and organizational conflicts of the Algerian Revolution)) that is, this novel focuses on the self, not the other, and this holds true for most novels that chronicled the revolution, as they did not focus on the colonial "other" as much as they focused on the suffering of the self, which is the result of the other's oppression.

This is what has made the fictional text more closely tied to extra-textual reality than to textual aesthetics. The author's aim in adopting this strategy is to document the historical events of the revolution in order to convince the reader of its narrative, ((The literary movement in Algeria has been linked to political transformations since its inception; it is therefore not surprising that these are reflected in most works and that content takes center stage, as if its reflection on the pages of the literary work were intended to serve as a bridge to the other shore—particularly with regard to the war of liberation or socialist discourse))

The book also focuses on examining the legacy of colonialism, which had a negative impact on society, and critiques the harsh social conditions in which the Algerian individual finds himself, such as "the issue of Algerian national identity and the marginalized indigenous culture, as depicted in novels including *The Memory of the Absent*" (Habib, p. 36).

It is clear from all these works that the narrative discourse is the most prominent and precise of postcolonial discourses, and the most effective in characterizing and exposing the colonial discourse. The novel depicts how imperialist colonialism worked to erase national identity and indigenous culture and to combat religion.

Here, "the Other" is the colonizer in all his strata and ranks, but after independence, did the colonizer remain "the Other," or has "the Other" become more diverse?

The Third Theme: Algerian Narrative and Issues of Post-Independence Society

1- The Question of Identity and Civilizational Conflict

The issue of identity and the countless concepts it encompasses raises a great deal of ambiguity, given the complexity of the term. “It has come to occupy the attention of many fields of research, which has increased its complexity, made it impossible to define, and rendered it impossible to assign a valid meaning on which we can all agree” The term “identity” has become widely used in the field of literary fiction, particularly due to its great significance in raising issues that affect the Algerian individual, who has continued to search for a sense of belonging and for his lost identity amid the influx of foreign culture during and after colonialism, when the colonizers sought to make Algeria “French” by combating its religion, language, and culture. Fiction conveys Algerian reality; thus, we find the concept of identity—defined as “the set of criteria by which an individual is identified, and which extends to the identity of the group, society, and culture”—. Consequently, the concept is linked more to the ideological dimension than to the scientific one, given that an individual’s identity can be expressed through religion, language, homeland, or culture—all of which are variable elements depending on how they are used, ((Hence, the question of identity has emerged as one of the most central concepts across various scientific fields; thus, identity, in particular, is preserved only through a people’s adherence to the culture they have inherited from their ancestors)) (The Problem of the Self and the Other, 2013, p. 15). The roots and authenticity of societies—embodied in their adherence to their culture—are at the heart of today’s conflict, as the ongoing process of cultural homogenization we are currently witnessing through cultural invasion has come to “threaten human individuality, which is quickly lost under the weight of the commonplace and the dominant, which derives its power from its prevalence and dominance, not from its authenticity and distinctiveness.” All of this has generated an epistemological crisis that has led the Algerian writer to strike a balance between the cultural framework in which he lived and his complete openness to a civilization and culture that are diametrically opposed to his own. He thus shaped his ideas and personality through the characters in his novels, creating a kind of emotional tension between acceptance and rejection of the other.)). This mirrors the Algerian reality emerging from a long period of colonialism, clinging to its religious, linguistic, and cultural distinctiveness in conflict with the colonizer, who represents the opposite.

The issue of identity is one of the most compelling themes in Algerian fiction, because the unique nature of Algerian society, its circumstances, and the country’s geographical location have provided fertile ground for the success and acceptance of these novels, which belong more to the historical than to the fictional realm. And because it has long proven to be the central theme explored by Algerian novelists in their works—even though each writer has his own unique approach to examining cultural implications in his narrative discourse, particularly as they relate to cultural identity and its most significant consequences— literary works have come to yearn for an introspection into the depths of the human self and an understanding of the primary reason for the ego’s reluctance to confront the other—a reluctance that has generated an eternal conflict, reflected in the nature of interpersonal relationships.

2- The Algerian Novel and the Social Context:

A novel derives its value when it is linked to the existing social context, analyzing it, highlighting its positives, and revealing its negatives by juxtaposing the real and the imagined simultaneously, thereby fulfilling two objectives for the reader (Rakibi, 2009, p. 242):

The first objective is for the reader to find a reflection of the lived reality they experience, with the details of this reality emerging within the body of the fictional text,

The second objective is for the reader to connect with the imaginary world created by the coherent linguistic structure.

A skilled creator is one who strives to achieve both objectives simultaneously to ensure that their fictional text has a wider readership and a continuous reception over time.

Every nation possesses a set of cultural values upon which an individual's behaviors and actions are based, bearing in mind that these behaviors and actions are not static due to the fluid nature of existing cultural values; and since the novelist is part of this fluid cultural reality, he will seek to scrutinize this reality, expressing it through language that will serve as the link between the reader and his reality, and the novelist's expression will be more vivid and authentic if he is part of the reality or society he is depicting, as was the case **with** the novelist **Ismail Yabrir** in his novel ***The Madman's Will***; he is from the very city and neighborhood he writes about, This novel, which I will analyze to shed light on the lost identity sought by the protagonist, **"Idris,"** and his relationship with the multifaceted "other"—with its many roles and faces—He is part of this narrow society that he portrays, embodied in the neighborhood of "One Hundred Houses"—"Diyar al-Shams"—which has never seen the light of progress, a dignified life, or modernization, especially from the era of independence through the "Black Decade."

Consequently, contemporary Algerian fiction focuses on the question of identity—which constitutes its fundamental characteristic—and, through its treatment of this issue, reflects the Algerian individual's questions about the relationship that binds him to his land, his religion, and his language.

((Consequently, language in postcolonial Algerian fiction served as a link between the reader and the new reality of the 1970s, and later the 1980s and 1990s. The reality of the 1970s was characterized at that time by a specific cultural concept: the notion of the land, which would be associated with the simple Algerian individual rather than with the arrogant feudal lord. However, what is new in the novel is the focus on the land and the Algerian peasant's connection to it, this ordinary person who struggles for it just as much as the feudal lord did against colonialism—a concept addressed **by Tahar Wattar** in his novel ***The Earthquake***, thereby affirming the slogan held high by the authorities of the 1970s: "The land belongs to those who serve it," even if the ways in which creators approached this concept varied.

Most novelists of this period established a single textual framework: alignment with the ideology of the ruling authority. Thus, the Algerian novelist presented the ideal reality with which the Algerian individual would identify—one based on the fusion of the self into the crucible of the collective self, subject to a single central authority: socialist power ((Rakibi, 2009, p. 241)).

This perspective extends to the novels of the 1980s, with some developments. Toward the end of this period and throughout the 1990s, the novel addressed a very sensitive period in Algerian society: the "Black Decade." (The novel presented this period from an analytical perspective, with the aim of capturing the interest of readers of the new millennium, so that they, in turn, might reexamine a reality they had actually lived through or heard about, and join the creators in posing the following question: What was the identity of the Algerian individual during this period? The reader begins to formulate an answer to this question as they interpret the various connotations associated with the novel's characters, producing a text that is parallel to the original, given that the dynamics of meaning within the text do not settle on a single interpretation))

(Idris, 2015, p. 67); This means that novelists raise the issue of identity, which in turn implies a new exploration of the concepts of the self and the other: Who is this self, and who is this other? This issue was not raised in colonial novels, where the self is always associated with the powerful figure who holds a condescending perspective, while the other is the weak one who is always dependent on the self's presence. In these novels, written by the colonizer or his subordinate, the roles are reversed: the "self" is the colonizer, and the "other" is the native. ((These novels convey a discourse that proclaims the colonizer's civilizational superiority, exposes the "other" as a hybrid, and does not hesitate to highlight convictions that legitimize the colonizer's cultural superiority based on the inferiority of all other human cultures.)) This framework regarding the nature of the self and the other has been presented by numerous scholars, including Edward Said.

Among the defining characteristics of the self highlighted by Algerian creators is language—though not as significant as other elements—in the conflict between Arabization and Francophonie, or between Arabic and French, which surfaced after independence and persisted through successive decades. From the colonial period through independence and beyond, the Algerian individual has been caught in the labyrinth of this conflict created by the French colonial power. As the majority of scholars of Algerian linguistic affairs observe, this power sought to oppose the Algerian people's identity, specifically regarding the issue of language. As we have noted, Algerian novelists have raised several issues that shape and affect Algerian identity from independence to the present day, including language, culture, memory, and religious extremism, the latter of which was a prominent theme during the "Black Decade." The Algerian individual's identity cannot be established apart from their memory, for it is their inescapable roots; it is ingrained in them no matter how much they try to forget or move beyond it, as it is inextricably linked to the Algerian individual within their homeland.

The Fourth Theme: Features and Analysis of Identity in Late Twentieth-Century and Twenty-First-Century Novels (The Search for Transformation and Difference)

After independence, the Algerian novel became a prominent and important forum for discussing and analyzing the significant and fateful issues experienced by Algerians in their quest to discover their identity. Language did not play a decisive role in defining identity in the Algerian novel, particularly during colonialism and after independence, because language was not a fundamental requirement for depicting the suffering of the Algerian people; rather, the most significant novels that portrayed the Algerian cause were written in French—they conveyed Arabic content in the French language. In this regard, Jaber Asfour states: ("They resisted French colonialism by writing in the language that had been forcibly imposed on them. They learned it and mastered it, and they wrote—not to serve French literature or French identity—but so that their French would become a language of resistance against the erasure of Arab identity, and a language that exposed the crimes of French colonialism and its brutal attacks on innocent citizens. Thus, we began to hear of names such as Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Maamari, and Malek Haddad—with Muhammad Dib at their forefront—who affirmed the Arab national identity)) (Al-Abyad, 2022). These writers succeeded in affirming their creative identity by separating language from the purpose of literary works, considering the former a tool of the craft and the latter the subject of the work.((That is why Muhammad Dib said: "Say that a national literature is now emerging in Morocco in general and Algeria in particular.")) (Al-Abyad, 2022). Writing in Arabic then began with the generation of Abd al-Hamid bin Hadouqa and al-Tahir Wattar, followed by the generations of Wasi al-A'raj, Amin al-Zawi, Ahlam Mosteghanemi, Ezzedine Mihoubi, and others. In these works, we find discussions of the self and the other, and a search for the lost sense of identity during the

“Black Decade.” This “other” is not necessarily Western—that is, of a nationality, religion, or language different from that of the Algerian people—but may be someone from within the homeland or from the same region.

The Fifth Theme: The Self and the Other in These Two Novels.

At the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third, Algerian fiction sought to highlight the relationship between the self and the other in various forms embodied by lived reality and the multitude of events experienced by the Algerian people during those decades. It expressed the complex relationships of modern humanity, whether on the level of the self or in terms of understanding the other and the universe; hence, we ask: Does the Algerian self contradict the other? Who is the other in Algerian fiction? Does the “self” represent the friend, and the “other” the enemy? Is there an inevitable conflict between the “self” and the “other,” or is there brotherhood and complementarity between them?

If we examine a selection of these novels, we find that the “self” soon seeks its existence in the “other,” especially since the “self” manifests its identity only through the presence of the other, ((Thus, the conflict—or rather, the encounter—between the “self” and the “other” remains an inevitable reality in the context of “here” and “there,” where this encounter is subject to a dual sense of attraction and repulsion, and harmony and difference.)) We observe from this view that writers (novelists) deliberately portrayed the “self” as being in a state of conflict and loss in the search for its identity, because this was the reality after independence. The long period of colonialism and its ingenuity in erasing—if not outright destroying—a country called Algeria left a hybrid and ambiguous cultural legacy. The writer from this society, depicts the state of society—and, by extension, the individual—after independence and the challenges it faced.

And if the relationship between the “self” and the “other” is the central thread of the creative text, it follows that the image of the other is not the other itself; rather, the image of the other is constructed in the imagination, and in discourse, the image is not reality, even if the conflict surrounding it stems from the stakes of reality. Consequently, the “self” and the “other” are images subject to change and modification, where the “self” is a conceptual framework developed by humans—whether as individuals or groups—while the “other” is a composite of social, psychological, intellectual, and behavioral traits that an individual or group attributes to others. Most, if not all, postcolonial novels describe the relationship between the self and the other. This “other” is not necessarily a physical person, but rather a moral entity, a symbol, or a set of concepts and practices that have taken root in Algerian society due to the long history and enduring legacy of colonialism. The images of the “self” and the “other” have been reshaped, and efforts have been made to eliminate this divide by the freedom fighters of Algeria in order to protect social cohesion, unity, and the country as a whole.

This is evident in most postcolonial novels: in the early 1960s and 1970s, they addressed the events of the revolution, the political struggle, and the atrocities of prolonged colonialism; and in the 1970s and 1980s, they addressed the legacy of colonialism and the emergence of opportunists who profited from the advent of independence—such as the feudal lords—as well as the modesty of the true mujahideen, their remaining in the shadows, and their marginalization and exclusion by the remnants of the colonizers (the “Children of Lalijwa”)—as they are described in most novels—to a certain extent. Many rights were lost, leading to a crisis in many decades and a revolt of the “self” against the local “other.” The novels also addressed the reforms of the 1970s and 1980s and even into the third millennium.

Furthermore, James Aho argues that “the world of life is like a fusion of things with specific characteristics, and among these things, first and foremost, there is the ‘self’ and that which is ‘not the self’; the ‘other’ consists of natural objects and people referred to as ‘you’” (Harley, 1999, p. 54).

If we return to the dialectic of the self and the other in Arabic fiction, we find that in most Arabic novels the other remains primarily aggressive, since any relationship with the other is based solely on a dynamic of the dominant and the subjugated, ((It is clear that “the Other” is a general term covering situations in which the linguistic and cultural differences of the Other are acknowledged—differences that form the basis of the “we” identity—and that this difference is defined as a relationship of hostility and violence between “us” and “them.”)), since the distinction between “us” and “them” was expressed through concepts such as “the image of the enemy,” “the Other,” and “the enemy.” Because religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences sometimes give rise to this conflict, the Arab self is committed to protecting its religion and language, rejecting subordination and assimilation into the culture of the “other”—a culture that has represented a continuous invasion for ages. As an inevitable consequence of the greed of the “other,” who colonized most Arab countries, the Arab self does not recognize the rights, freedoms, and distinctiveness of every society and rejects peaceful coexistence. Rather, it seeks to exert control through ongoing indirect colonization, which is evident in our own time. Therefore, those who differ religiously and culturally will always remain enemies, for novels depict reality—they are not fantasies written by an author and then adopted by society, even if they contain elements of the imaginary.

This pertains to the comparison between Arabs or Muslims as a whole and Westerners; however, among the people of a single nation, the “self/other” dichotomy does not necessarily mean that the “self” is Arab and the “other” is Western. ((In **Ibrahim Abdel-Qader** al-Mazni’s ***Ibrahim the Writer***, we see that the “other” represents the countryside, and in **Muhammad Sari’s** novel ***The Eroded Castles***, the first party—the “self”—is a native of the city of “Ain al-Karma,” while the second party—the “other”—is the extremist Islamic movement.

Consequently, the dialectic has come to focus on forms of the self in conflict with itself; the “other” is not necessarily geographically distant, historically hostile, or in constant competition, for the self can be divided against itself, with one part fighting the other)) (Haidar, 1999, p. 11). This is another form of conflict between “the self that is the other,” which arises when a unifying sense of belonging disappears, interests diverge, and misconceptions and false ideas take root and spread throughout societies, leading to the prevalence of self-interest—not as an individual concern but as one serving the interests of a particular group.

Thus, the exchange of perspectives within a single Arab society takes on a social dimension in which the forms and structures of conflict vary, revealing hierarchies and divisions. Since every culture has a history of enmity, there has always been “the other ‘we,’” or what is called “the local other” or “the near other,” which has taken on various forms as the “distant other” has been perceived. To put it more clearly, this “near other” is an extension of the “distant other.”

1) The novel *Nawar al-Lawz* (*The Exile of Salih bin Amer al-Zufri*) by Lusini al-A’raj

The novel is set in a town called “**Masiarda**,” a border town, and the author, “**Wusini al-A’raj**,” chose this town deliberately and with precision, because conflict and contradictions are most evident in border regions.

This novel is a quintessential example of postcolonial literature in Algeria, set at the dawn of independence, following decisive and fateful decisions in the building of the fledgling Algerian state—such as the

nationalization of hydrocarbons and the agrarian revolution (“Land to those who work it”); these lands—which the true sons of the revolution had hoped to reform and rebuild—became the scene of a conflict between them, the architects of independence who had liberated the land from colonialism, and the remnants and holdouts of colonialism. The opportunists (the “sons of Laliya”), as the author describes them, spread their evil and wreaked havoc across the land. This forced the true mujahideen to relinquish their right to live on this land and choose exile instead.

From there, I will attempt to trace the image of this “other” as embodied in the relational dialogue among the characters in **Loucini Al-Araj’s** novel ***Nour al-Luz***, where I sought to analyze the binaries of difference at various levels to examine the dialectic of “self/other,” which finds its depth and tension in contemporary Algerian fiction; where the Other represents a part of the self and is necessary for its discovery, since the conception of the “self” is inseparable from the conception of the Other. The dialogue between the self and the Other unfolds within the framework of “here” and “there,” amid a dialectical conflict that intensifies at the threshold of (negation/identification, difference/conformity, openness/closedness), thus embodying the dialectic of the self and the other; the dialectic of attraction and repulsion, the opposition’s fascination with its antithesis, its desire to possess it, to struggle against it, and sometimes to destroy it.

The novel ***Nawar al-Luz*** addresses a tragedy deeply rooted in Arab identity: the mismanagement of leaders and rulers and their neglect of their subjects’ interests, as the common people remain shackled by slavery—from the slavery of colonialism to the slavery of self-interest, underpinned by the dichotomy of ***power/weakness*** and there is no solution other than war, which may align with Wasini al-A’raj’s view in this novel, as he believes that “ever since we came to exist on this land, and to this very day, the sword has been our only language for resolving our complex **problems**” (al-A’raj, 1982, p. 5). Here, through the voice of his protagonist, the author reveals the difficulty of the situation in Arab societies, where there is no room for dialogue, for prioritizing the public interest, or for avoiding ethnic and religious conflicts; rather, the scene is dominated by a thirst for control and opportunism. It is as if the author has reached a point of despair regarding the possibility of changing reality; in his view, we may have rid ourselves of traditional military colonialism, but we are unable to rid ourselves of another form of colonialism—and to coexist with one another.

Saleh bin Amer al-Zufri—the **protagonist** of **this** novel—was a symbol of the Arab self, weighed down by worry, alienation, and sorrow even in the heart of its own homeland, for this self soon sought its existence through conflict with the “other,” whether that “other” was the self itself—burdened by loneliness and alienation—or its miserable reality and poverty, as embodied by the children of Laliya and others.

From this, three levels emerge:

A) The psychological level: His withdrawal into himself and descent into a trance within the depths of his being, confining him to his past and the exploits of the Banu Hilal. And his openness to the “other” through his turning to women in the hope of finding fulfillment.

This psychological crisis he is experiencing and his escape from reality stem from his inability to accept a reality in which the feudal lords (the sons of Laliqwa) and their children have become the privileged ones, enjoying a prestigious status in this society and reaping all the benefits.

B) Social Level: It is evident that he belongs to the poor class, and his helplessness is clear in his resorting to illegal activities such as smuggling in order to make a living, after he had to choose between three options:

waiting for death if he opened a shop, like “Rummel al-Qahwaji”; inevitable death—that is, suicide, like “al-Khayari”; or a struggle with death by engaging in smuggling.

c) Relational Level: This manifests in defiance toward others and a quest to assert one’s existence. This defiance took three forms:

His defiance of Al-Sabai, by rejecting his temptations; the latter tempted him with quick profits through smuggling his sheep, but he refused and chose a career of death rather than sell his pride to a descendant of the Al-Qayyad clan.

His mockery of the traitors; for example, “Al-Miloud, son of Si Lakhdar,” a municipal employee, whose temptations to sell the blood of the martyrs Salih rejected; for he preferred to benefit from the agricultural revolution rather than sell his blood and sweat in exchange for swimming pools, villas, and high-rises. And his humiliation of the new lineage of the Qayyad: by breaking the spine of Yassin, the servile Sabaybi)) (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 5). This Meloud is one of the sons of the colonialists’ followers who were in hiding, and whose remnants remained after independence; they attributed the victory to themselves, benefited from it, and turned it into an opportunity for control and profit. He became a municipal employee, and it is he who judges the sons of the revolution and the mujahideen as to who is entitled to benefit from the lands of the agricultural revolution. All under the pretext that the files—which they themselves had forged—are missing.

Nevertheless, Saleh’s journeys—indeed, his “exile”—continued, though the last of them was an admission of his defeat at the hands of his close adversary (the Lalijo boys); He stated explicitly that his conflict with the “other” had but one inevitable end: death at the other’s hands, as he said, “Such is our lot: those who did not fall into the void died in the desolation of prisons.” (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 6). So he resolved to journey to the distant land beyond the border, fleeing to Morocco to his sister’s home, for he could not bear the betrayal by the other side (the Lalijo boys...), as they had labeled him a “dangerous element,” as stated in the file left behind by the French. Crying out in anguish, he exclaimed: “Look, people, I have been turned into a dangerous element in this country to which I gave the blood of my heart; they are resorting to the files left behind by de Gaulle, Bédier, and the murderers.” (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 153). At the same time, his journey to Morocco—his exile—was a challenge to the other (the “Sons of Lalijo”), yet his fate was imprisonment at the hands of the Weasel (descendant of the Leader). Here, imprisonment is but one manifestation of the classic ending that has become ingrained in the Arab self, for defeatism has remained an ingrained pattern attached to the Arab self in its struggle with the Other—or rather, in its journey to seek its own existence. Nevertheless, he resisted, persevered, and began to instill hope in a defiance against his own self, saying, “I will be Al-Jaziyah—whose existence he always dreams of—and I will bring the plant of the poor of Bani Hilal back to life... and tomorrow the light of its fruit will shine like the almond trees whose blossoms have begun to pierce through the snowflakes clinging to the branches.”. Here, Salih steels himself and instills hope within himself, just as the mujahideen in the mountains steeled themselves by keeping hope alive within themselves—not merely the hope, but the certainty—of the inevitability of independence.

Thus, the “self” (Saleh) continues its journey in its struggle against the other—indeed, against the heirs of betrayal and the “Lalijo” lineage—and this struggle was not limited to the new generation alone; rather, it extended to the Qayad lineage by exposing their true colors and revealing their betrayals. “Nawar al-Luz” depicted a miserable reality; its light dimmed, but it recently reappeared in a new guise, with a more radiant appearance, as the “T” (Saleh) derives its presence from the “we”—which refers to the simple working class, suffering the scourges of the “near Other” represented by the “Sons of Lalijo” and their lineage, or rather

the authoritarian class—from the authority of military colonialism (the “Other”—the French) to the authority of administrative colonialism (the “Other”—the Qayyad lineage). Saleh says, in his confinement to his homeland, “Ah, O Kabyle Longa; we love our country, but it is not ours” Here, despite having achieved independence—and even though the children of the revolution are supposed to live equally on this land and reap its benefits—his words convey great sadness, a profound sense of alienation, and despair over reality.

In this novel, I attempt to trace the image of the “other,” as portrayed by the author through the words of “Saleh,” the novel’s protagonist, and through the narrator’s voice.

A) The Other: The Enemy

I (Saleh, descendant of the martyrs) --- The Other (the children of Lalijo, descendants of the leaders)

Through this statement, we see a fundamental difference between the two sides of the conflict; they are polar opposites, as confirmed by **“Filiho Harley,”** who argues that “the enemy appears only if the ‘we’ is perpetuated, and they are fundamentally different; that is, when the distinction between them is understood as a reflection of a conflict between good and evil, and when good is associated with ‘we’ and evil with ‘them’” The image of the other as the enemy emerges from a web of complex relationships, interwoven with the legacies of the past. Both groups share a national identity, religion, and land, but what distinguishes them is their opposing approaches to dealing with colonialism.

The first group consists of veteran mujahideen, while the other group served as agents of the colonialists. The first clash with the other side emerged during an administrative conflict, which claimed the life of the mayor. As the narrator states in the novel: “Even the mayor, Budlakhah Ya Salih, was found one dawn floating bloated on the surface of the valley’s waters, stabbed ten times. They fought him to the death, he threatened to expose the file on the theft of Al-Madar cement and the construction of the dams, and Al-Sabai (Ras al-Ghul) brandished his connections in the capital)) Here, the conflict is not about differences of opinion or an intellectual debate over how to build this village or town—which is a microcosm of Algeria—but rather a struggle to reap the benefits (to obtain the country’s resources) unchallenged, a struggle that went so far as to kill a government official when he stood up to them. As for Al-Khayari, he committed suicide out of despair over this reality, which had turned his world upside down. The narrator says: “Poor Al-Khayari—he was so enraged he nearly died when he was shocked to find the graves of martyrs being sold to non-martyrs. He was found one cold dawn, hanged like a dry acorn in a wild forest, as if mocking these insect-like creatures for whom time stands still at its peak and never stops.” Here, the narrator depicts another form of death; this scene illustrates the ego’s rejection of reality, its inability to live with it, and its powerlessness to change it—which led it to prefer death over living alongside these insect-like creatures, as he describes them. This is an accurate description, for insects live off the remains of others and benefit from them, just as these people benefit from the achievements of the revolution. Their opportunism has reached the point of selling the graves of martyrs.

Meanwhile, Lakhdar was killed because he was forced to resort to smuggling to make a living; the novel depicts this scene **as follows**: “Just yesterday they killed him—Lakhdar—and found him by an ancient wall, with three bullet wounds in his head that robbed him of his childhood and his dreams.” ((All these events and crimes show that the “self” has become confined and trapped within a cycle of death, leaving it with no other solution, according to Saleh: either break out of the cycle, or die within its rot—you and the lute you

play)) Thus, the arena of conflict between the “self” and the local “other” remains open to a series of deaths with an unknown outcome.

The nature of the relationship between the self and the other is shaped by every interaction or encounter with a stranger, as the image of the self remains fixed—represented by “Saleh al-Zoufri”—while the image of the enemy “other” remains ambiguous and more subject to the influence of various factors and circumstances. Consequently, we find the following relationships:

1- **A hostile relationship: The Self (Saleh) ----- The Other (Al-Sabai)**

This other character (**Al-Sabai**) represents the Al-Qayyad lineage, the “Sons of Lalijo,” as he “aspires to subjugate the entire village just as his father did; he envisions the whole world under his thumb—a mere flick of his finger is enough to make people come running, barefoot and naked, begging for his forgiveness and **love**” The author portrays this “other,” Al-Sabai, as the “leader” of the independence era; he acts just as his father did during the colonial period, standing on his lute before the people, issuing orders and shouting; he is the ultimate authority, and it is he who must be appeased for their interests to be served. Accordingly, the relationship of this “other” can be defined on two levels:

The first level: general relationships that depict the “other” in his interactions with the villagers, and two paradoxes can be identified:

A) (**Death / Wedding**): At a time when the townspeople are offering condolences for their loss, this “other,” “Al-Sabaybi,” says, “Good morning to the good people; may God grant you great reward, O Al-Qahwaji.” and he goes on to invite the crowd of mourners to his nephew’s wedding: “Hey everyone, I won’t take up much of your time. Mr. Ibrahim, Saleh, Boujemaa, and Qouider, come to the evening feast with your guests.”. This other figure, who is the heir to colonialism even in his disavowal of his own people and his lack of empathy for their pain and sorrow, is a son of this country only by birth; his allegiance, however, lies with the distant, foreign other, in whose embrace he was raised until he became just like them.

B) – (**Collaboration During the Colonial Era / The Demand for Rehabilitation After Independence**): Expose these figures who worked for France during the colonial era, then turned into opportunists and imposed their control over the town; they are the legitimate heirs of colonialism and carry out its role as if it were still present. In the difficult times of the past, “they sold God and the land, and slept humbly at the feet of the colonists.” And now they are puffing out their feathers in our faces like sick roosters, unsure of their own courage, and exploiting the harsh circumstances to turn them to their own advantage. They are the vicious figures who bereaved us of our dearest loved ones)) (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 148) Whether before or after independence, the selfishness of this local “other” and his betrayal of his conscience are clearly embodied in this novel, as if the author were saying that it is “he” (the “other”) who seeks to exploit the situation at all times, collaborates with all kinds of people, and imposes his control just as he did during the days of colonialism

On the second, more personal level: Personal relationships, defined by the tempting offer that Al-Sabai made to Al-Zufri, the novel’s protagonist or “I,” addressing him as follows: “Look, I’ll show you a way to make more money and get you out of government service. You’ll take the sheep, smuggle them— —cross the border with them, and bring me the dirhams; your share is guaranteed.”) (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 148), but his offer was rejected: ((“It’s true that I’m poor and hungry, but I certainly won’t turn into a puppy in your hands.”) , which caused the other to harbor hostility toward this “I” (Saleh), as he came to him gloating on

the day of his arrest. The author attempts to shed light on this other character and his ilk in post-independence Algeria during this sensitive phase of the country's history—the beginning of nation-building— as if the author were saying: just as they sold out their brothers and their country yesterday during the days of colonialism, they are selling them out today as well—in the days of independence—to die on the borders, and they are selling out their country by plundering its wealth and smuggling it abroad.

2- A Relationship of Hostility: The Self (Saleh) ----- The Other (Al-Nams)

The Other (**the Weasel**) is aptly named; his very name indicates his cunning and malice. The author has carefully and deliberately chosen all the characters' names in the novel, which reveal their inner makeup and correspond to their roles.

This "Weasel" takes great pleasure in harming people, and a personal enmity binds him to the Protagonist; the Protagonist (Saleh) believes the Weasel is the reason he was deprived of fatherhood: as he says, "If it weren't for him, my son would be my friend **now**" (Al-A'raj, 1982, p. 102). ((I hold you responsible for the death of my only son, O weasel)) (Al-A'raj, 1982, p. 102). From this, we see that the death of this child is nothing but a symbol of radical otherness; for this "other" (the children of Laliyo) works to sever the lineage of the living conscience. As Saleh puts it: "We have entered into a fierce war with the foreigners who understand nothing but the language of the sword and the slaughter of necks." (Al-A'raj, 1982, p. 102). This radical otherness is manifested in the "politics of death" that the Weasel imposes on Al-Bararik's sons, who work as smugglers. The narrator, Saleh, describes them as "foreigners" and represents them as "the Other"—the "Weasel"—because their hostility and war are no different from the days of the colonizers.

3- Relationship of hostility: I (Saleh) ----- The Other (Yassin)

This other individual was **one of al-Sabai's followers**; for after al-Sabai failed to enlist Salih in his service ((by smuggling sheep and providing whiskey and pastis to officials)) ((he found what he was looking for in Yassin, the red-eyed one, and led him by the nose like a sheep; Yassin would sell his own mother for a few dirhams)) Here, Yassin represents the "Other" who obeys the orders of the "Other"—the descendant of the leader. From the perspective of self-interest, he is bound by a relationship of hostility toward Saleh's "ego," which generated hostility between the two parties (the "ego" and the "Other"). This hostility escalated as a result of a violent physical confrontation that nearly killed Yassin because he had mocked "Hamid al-Qahwaji" in Saleh's presence.

Thus, as we have seen, the image of the local "Other" is multifaceted; it may be a group or an alliance united by shared interests. Similarly, the "Self" is not singular; it may be a group subjected to the same circumstances and sharing the same concerns.

4- Hostile Relationship: The Self (Saleh) ----- The Other (Miloud)

The latter is one of the "sons of Laliyo," a municipal employee tasked with handling the files of veteran mujahideen and beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution—a fact that horrifies "Saleh," who asks in astonishment, "By God, are you judging people? Oh, Miloud, what era is this, son of Al-Sayyid Al-Khid! Yesterday you were slaughtering me and your own parents, and today you're evaluating the extent of my willingness to sacrifice for this land that has crushed us." (The Lame Man, 1982, p. 43). Nevertheless, he did not harbor a personal grudge against him; rather, it was a shift in the balance of power, as it deprived Salih of benefiting from the agricultural revolution. According to Miloud, "The agricultural revolution requires official documentation; in the capital, emotions don't work with them—they only recognize papers and

documents.” This provokes the “self” (Saleh), who becomes enraged and responds to the other, “Al-Miloud,” in a fit of anger: ((If I had wanted to prove my struggle and my integrity with a piece of paper, I would have done so the day I first came down from the forest, when chaos still reigned in the country)) And so the “ego” was unable to assert its presence before the other, finding no solution but to flee, ((I fled because I hated and grew weary of a town where martyrs are sold just as junk is sold in cheap markets; and no matter how hard we tried to be good, we found ourselves groaning under hunger and under the painful words that kill from within and do more damage than a bullet))

In the novel **Nawar al-Luz**, the author depicts the situation that the country and the mujahideen—represented by “the ego” Salih—found themselves in after independence, in a blend of history and fiction. The status and rights of the mujahideen were placed in the hands and at the mercy of those who sold out the country during the colonial era. In contrast, “Al-Ana” Saleh did not defend the country with arms during the colonial era because he expected something in return; he did not even think to obtain proof of his service, for he had simply fulfilled his duty, and it was his love for this country that drove him to jihad. He never imagined he would need documents to prove his jihad, but the balance of power shifted after independence, and “Al-Ana” reached a point of despair that led him to decide to leave this country—where martyrs are sold—and flee. He did not suffer during the days of fighting colonialism as much as he suffers today from oppression and the horror of the trauma.

If we attempt to categorize these four relationships according to the conflict strategies defined by **Victor Bucotasta** in three categories, we find them as follows:

First: Passive, in which the other is perceived as a threat to society and its culture, and which corresponds to a strategy of rejection and expulsion, as represented in the novel:

Saleh, $\longleftrightarrow$ (*The Children of Laligo*).

Second: This is closer to temporary neutrality, in which the other does not appear to be either accepted or rejected, but rather seems capable of being one or the other; this scenario is suited to a strategy of containment through subordination.

Yassin Al-Sabai $\longleftarrow$ Al-Ma'mar (formerly)

Third: This represents an image of “the Other” as a bearer of human values, whose difference can be a source of richness. This image is suited to a strategy of cooperation and citizenship, which may correspond to the following relationship:

Saleh Mouh $\dashv$ Al-Katatbi

For “Mouh,” after a long silence, decided to support the “self”—Saleh—and expose the “other”—“the Lalijo boys”—saying: “Uncle Saleh, I’m with you until death; call on me and you’ll find me.” (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 195).

Upon examining all the characters and events in this novel and analyzing these relationships, we find that **the “I”—Saleh**—and those who support him represent the general public and the vulnerable in this town, whereas the enemy and his allies represent the town’s authorities, having seized power by killing the mayor, Budlakha, and having ruled the town and controlled the distribution of agricultural land.

b) The “Other”: Women

Gender (male/female) is considered one of the cornerstones of humanity, ((in light of which work, roles, and functions are distributed between the sexes in all human societies)) (Labib et al., 1999, p. Perhaps the image of the domineering woman here is embodied in her femininity across its various models (Al-Masiridiya, Al-Jaziya, Titma, and Longa); nevertheless, the nature of her relationship with men varied between that of a complementary partner and that of a negated (marginalized) party suffering from injustice and oppression.

The image of the woman whose agency is nullified appeared in Longa’s relationship with the Imam, as she was forced to marry him against her will, which traumatized her; she came to fear nothing ((The fear complex took hold of her from the day they kidnapped her from the woods while she was tending her sheep, her eyes closed and swollen from crying so much. They placed her in the Imam’s house, but she refused to marry him and declared her refusal; they condemned her for it and considered her act satanic)) ((They slaughtered a black goat and poured its blood over my head; they tied me up, and I cried until I fainted; they placed me inside a silk bed that the imam had inherited from a French family)) (Al-A’raj, 1982, p. 236); Just as the Imam inherited his silk bed from colonialism, so too did the general public inherit that superstitious mindset, which took root in the popular consciousness; Thus, “ ” became a constitution governing their affairs, leading them to believe that anything outside the norm is possessed. It is not customary for a woman to reject a man, nor does she have the right to declare her rejection; and if she does, it is not her doing, but rather the work of jinn and the devil.

In contrast to this suppressed female self, we see a positive image represented by the presence of women as an extension of men, in whom men see their other half capable of fulfilling their potential; This image was exemplified by the relationship that bound Salih (the ego) to his female counterpart, in whom he saw his extension; however, the encounter between the ego (Salih) and the other—the woman (Al-Jaziyah)—a mythical figure stemming from the Banu Hilal, always led to separation, as the novel’s opening lines made clear.

C) The Other: Place

Narrative, as is well known, must be tied to a spatial setting; it is self-evident that this place is associated with a sense of otherness—such as Misirda, Al-Abbas, beyond the borders, and even Al-Baraka.

“Masiarda” appeared as a refuge for strangers: “The people of Al-Barariq were a motley crew; each came from a different region. They had heard the tale of the dam at Masiarda and came from every deep ravine. With the long wait, most of them turned to drug use, the ‘tarabando,’ and a life of debauchery.”

And so Saleh’s exile beyond the border turns into a struggle between death and life—two sides of the same coin. It is the town that sleeps on the edge of the border, which made Saleh grow weary of his life and think more than once of moving far away. He says: (“I swear by God, O Al-Masiridiya, this land that has burned our hearts—either it will turn into a gentle and kind woman, or I will commit a folly against it before I fall, burned, at the feet of this ever-suffering land. This filthy profession, O Al-Masiridiya—inside it, one is lost;

outside it, one is **born**") (Al-A'raj, 1982, p. 221), and he disappears after his shoulders are weighed down by worries, fleeing beyond the borders.

The author structured the events of his novel by choosing a border town—"Lamsirda"—that fits the novel's plot; for in border regions one finds all manner of contradictions, dangers, and the degradation of smuggling, as well as the kinds of people shaped by this environment of instability and uncertainty, The life of the "bararik" signifies a sense of "no place," and thus their existence is defined by a constant search for the self.

As for "baraka," its meaning can be associated with the homeland.

Dar Saleh Homeland

↓ ↓
(The condition of al-Baraka and its struggle against the cold) (The condition of
the children of al-Bararik and their struggle against the children of Laliyo)

↓ ↓
The wall cracks and the Jazia emerges Construction of the dam begins A decision
foreshadowing the "globalization" issue

↓ ↓
Hope for a Historic Hero to Crush Hope for Radical Change

The Unhappy Past

orir

take

Dar

(Diyar al-Shams). The author is a native of this city; he was born and raised in this neighborhood, where he heard about some of these events and experienced others firsthand during the "Black Decade." He crafted the novel as a fictional narrative inspired by both reality and history.

This novel focuses **The symbolism linking Al-Barariq to the homeland, and the "I" of Saleh to the "I" of the Al-Barariq community,**

health care. In the novel, **the narrator, Idris, says:** "I woke up late, as usual. Today is the first of January, the start of a year filled with events, crimes, and news. But here in the Land of the Sun, we exist outside of time, far removed from the world and the events created by humans. We are simple beings who sleep and wake in search of the present day; tomorrow does not concern us much, and yesterday is forever shrouded in nostalgia, even if it tends to our fractures... This, then, is a year that will not celebrate me. I do not attach

any significance to time because of where I belong, and because—likewise—I have never dared to understand the meaning of time or to think about it.)) The author depicts the neighborhood's isolation and its immersion in its past—if I may put it that way—searching for its present and refusing to let the future enter. This is a result of the marginalization it suffers. Those in power and those responsible for the people's interests have forgotten them, so they, in turn, have forgotten the world; they have chosen isolation and the creation of their own rituals. The “self” and the “other”—which is multifaceted and encompasses the neighborhood's residents—have, through their belonging to this neighborhood, become indifferent to the passage of time, because they either do not want to evolve or have been denied the opportunity to do so.

The novel's events take place in a neighborhood that is socially and geographically isolated; geographically, due to its location confined to the valley and the bridge that separates it from the heart of the city, it corresponds to the Al-Bararik neighborhood in the town of Al-Musayrida in the previous novel. It is socially isolated due to the superstitious ideas left behind by colonialism and its fostering of outdated mindsets and witchcraft.

The protagonist's name is **“Idris,” and he is the “I”**—a bakery worker whose father is a disciplined man respected by all.

This novel explores the search for **the self and the other**—one of the major themes and dichotomies raised by colonial literature—and addresses them through cultural criticism, analyzing and examining the characterization of the **self and the other** and the dichotomies of difference that arise from their relationship.

I will therefore attempt to trace the image of this “other” as embodied in the interpersonal dialogue among the characters in **Ismail Yabrir's** novel ***The Madman's Will***, where I have sought to interpret the binaries of difference at various levels to examine the dialectic of the “self” and the “other.” This “other,” who is local in this novel—from the same city and the same neighborhood—is often separated from the self and becomes an enemy.

The dialogue between “the self and the other” unfolds within the framework of “here” and “there,” amid a dialectical conflict that intensifies at the threshold of (negation/identification, difference/conformity, openness/closure), thus embodying the dialectic **of the self and the other**; the dialectic of attraction and repulsion, the opposition's fascination with its opposite, its desire to possess it, to struggle against it, and sometimes to destroy it.

The novel begins with the death of the “I's” grandfather, the caretaker of the Christian cemetery, who had long ago dug his own grave in the Muslim cemetery and bequeathed that he be buried there. He had informed his grandson, **the “I,” Idris**, of this, but Idris forgot. So when his time came, he was buried in another grave after a long debate among those present that lasted until evening.

That evening, a feast of couscous with meat was held, and this memorial service turned into a gathering and a celebration of conversation at the deceased's feast.

The story begins with Idris, the novel's protagonist, reading his brother's papers—which serve as a will.

The events of this novel take place in the neighborhood of **“Diyar al-Shams,”** which is part of the larger neighborhood **of “Sawn Mezo”**—a small homeland whose borders end at Wadi Mallah, and beyond the banks of this valley lies the “other,” the stranger.

Sometimes “the Other” is someone outside the borders of the homeland (Algeria)—who may share the same religion and language, or differ religiously, linguistically, and culturally—as is the case when Saadi leaves for Libya. Or “the Other” becomes “the place,” which lies outside Algeria.

The protagonists of this novel are: **“the narrator, Idris,” and his father Lakhdar; Saadi, who was initially Idris’s friend but later became his enemy; Saadi’s father, the sad landowner (the sorcerer); his mother, Taqiya; the “other woman,” Fatima, Bourguiba’s daughter; and the Quran teacher “Si al-Musafa.”**

The dialogue in this novel unfolds through the themes of (agreement/disagreement), (obedience/rebellion), and (good/evil).

A) – The Other: The Enemy

I (Idris, one of the simple folk of the neighborhood (the city)) --- The Other (the fake mujahideen and those with outdated mindsets)

The Other: The Enemy

Idris ----- Al-Saadi

Al-Saadi, who was a childhood friend but became an enemy in his youth after returning from Libya

Idris says: **“I remember us sitting on the edge of the valley when we were six years old. Al-Saadi had just arrived in the city with his mother—my aunt Al-Taqiya, who cries a lot and laughs a lot—and his sister Zahra, whose voluptuous figure still fills the empty spaces in my mind, despite the passing years. She was married off young and is now a mother just like her own mother, as my mother says... My uncle Suleiman, the father of Al-Saadi—the amateur sorcerer whom we used to call ‘The Sad Master’ after Omar al-Najjar gave him that name—used to complain a lot about children; he didn’t like any of them and showed no compassion toward any of the neighborhood’s mischievous kids.”** (Yabrir, 2013, p. 26).

In the narrator’s description of his relationship with the “Other,” Saadi—who arrived in this neighborhood, which is the narrator’s home—is, from the outset, the “Other.” He came with his mother and sister, who also represent the “Other”—the different or the eccentric. After they settled in his neighborhood (his city), they became the “close Other,” and he refers to their mother as “my aunt.” And Zahra, the sister of the “close other,” represents the female extension of the “I”—this woman who remains trapped in a society governed by outdated mindsets and the dominance of the male “other,” who marries off his daughter at a young age and deprives her of an education despite her academic excellence.

The narrator, “Idris,” describes the characters of this neighborhood and the conflict-ridden relationship he has had with them since childhood—a conflict that is intellectual, moral, and cultural; he cannot accept their outdated ideas or the legacy of colonialism, which has obscured the tenets of religion and spread superstitions and sorcery among them. Just as the colonists left behind the “Children of Laliwa” in the previous novel, they have left behind the deviants, those clinging to ignorance and outdated mindsets, and those who have stolen the jihad from the martyrs—a group that dominates both novels. They are represented by Bourguiba, “the Sad Landlord,” and Saadi, the father of “the Other Who Is Close”—who is also the most evil enemy, corrupting the lives of the neighborhood’s residents and harming them.

This “Other,” who lacks mercy and compassion toward children, corresponds to the “Other”—**the weasel—in the previous novel**, who killed the son of **“the narrator Salih.”**

In this novel, we see a shift in the characters’ allegiances and roles: Saadi was initially the “Other”—a supportive friend to the “I”—but he transformed into the enemy “Other” after emigrating to Libya for work. **The “I,” Idris**, says: “Saadi has become a blatant source of harm since he returned, and he has not stopped declaring his hatred for me.” At first, I thought he was joking with me, and that his temperament had changed after long years in Libya that had affected his accent and his behavior, but he continued to look at me with malice without interrupting me; his eyes grew sharper, and his questions and suspicions grew day by day... He would recount vague details about his life outside Algeria; I could understand why I might be his enemy, and perhaps I knew but pretended not to. (Yabrir, 2013, pp. 54–55).

His friend Saadi turned from a friend into an enemy after his return from Libya, as his ideas and allegiances shifted. His journey had not gone well, and he returned to swallow the bitterness of failure; his quarrels and conflicts with **“the self”—“Idris”**—escalated to the point of enmity and murder. **“The self—Idris”** says: ((I rush back, I jog, I run fast, and the street stretches on as if it were endless; I run and run and run as if I’ll never arrive. I’m sweating, scared, and choking; I wanted to vomit at the end of the street and sit on the ground, to cry and scream, to turn myself in to the police. I killed Al-Saadi a month ago and hid the killer at my aunt’s house; I left my aunt Al-Taqiya alone, and perhaps she died of grief and sorrow over her son.)) Here, the “I” describes his state of mind after killing Al-Saadi; a month later, he is still reeling from the bitterness of his crime, filled with conflicting emotions—fear, remorse, regret, and a guilty conscience. He is also unable to face up to his crime and accept punishment, which is why he did not turn himself in to the police.

And Ana Idris found himself in conflict with himself, and in pain after killing the other man, Al-Sa’di, saying, “I am lost in a whirlpool of delirium; I long for Al-Sa’di, and I am not tormented because I killed him, but because I lost him. Killing him was the least I could do for him. He had abandoned himself; he had broken every promise. He didn’t need me to be his martyr—otherwise, I would have done so. He didn’t need me to speak to him or remind him of what we shared. He needed to be banished from this place. Al-Sa’di is stubborn, and it’s impossible to drive him out of the neighborhood. Killing him was the only solution. That is why I do not torment myself over his death.” The other may turn from friend to enemy, just as the self may turn into an enemy—due to social ills, despair, the hardships of life, and the frustration that afflicts young people when they fail to achieve their dreams. And when ideas changed because of the “Black Decade.”

This leads us to identify two levels:

A) The psychological level: His withdrawal into himself and his inner conflict, and his descent into a state of terror and numbness due to his inability to accept what he had done, leaving him in conflict with himself and his conscience.

B) The social level: He appears to be from the poor class, in a society where adults have abandoned their duty to protect and care for the young, to guide and advise them, and in a social environment rife with charlatanism, superstition, and social ills.

The Other: The Enemy

Idris ----- Sayyid al-Musafa

Si al-Musafa is the irascible teacher at the Quranic school, who is extremely strict about making the children memorize the Quran. Idris describes **him**, saying, “As the days went by, the Quranic school became a harsh punishment for both of us, not to mention our shared failure to pass the first level... The successive punishments meted out by Mr. Al-Musafa were more than overwhelming; not a week went by without me receiving two or three lashes.” (Yabrir, 2013, p. 30). **“I,” “Idris,”** and Al-Saadi were in complete harmony and shared a childhood friendship; Al-Saadi was not the enemy nor the opposite, but rather his complement. We find that the relationships between the novel’s characters alternate between the “self” and the “other”: the “self”—the writing teacher “Si al-Musafi”—is in opposition to and hostile toward the “other”—the sorcerer “the Sad Owner.”

The “other”—the teacher—is the enemy who remained firmly etched in Idris’s memory despite his young age. An enemy in childhood because he represents oppression and fear; in adulthood, however, he is the teacher and mentor whom the “self” respects.

The Other: The Enemy

Idris al-Saadi ----- Bourguiba

Bourguiba, who falsified and claimed to have performed the Hajj and jihad, and came to lead the people of the neighborhood, prompting the “self” to say: “I was confronted **at** the entrance to the home of Hajj Bourguiba, who had never performed the Hajj... I do not know when Hajj Bourguiba waged jihad, but he attained a respected position among the province’s mujahideen; no occasion passes without him being present alongside the province’s dignitaries and officials)) (Yabrir, 2013, p. 50).

In postcolonial studies, the “self” may be an individual, a collective, or a group of people. Here, the “self” draws its strength from the “we”—represented by **“Al-Ana and Al-Saadi”**—in confrontation with the “other”: the descendant of Al-Qayyad and the sons of Lalijoua, who forged documents and became a mujahid. This “other,” Bourguiba, is portrayed by the author as the “leader” of the independence era in this town or neighborhood; he is analogous to and the counterpart of **“Al-Sabaibi” in Nawar Al-Luz’s novel.**

B) – The Other: Women

Idris ----- Fatima

No novel is complete without women; they play a role in driving its events, and postcolonial Algerian novelists have relied heavily on them. Women were present and active in the events of the Algerian Revolution and in postcolonial fictional novels.

Fatima, Bourguiba’s daughter—who had studied with Saadi and Idris—got married; she was like a third companion. **“I, Idris”** says: “Fatima got married just as we were preparing to say goodbye to eighth grade... Al-Saadi wept on the roof of their house on her wedding day, while I watched Hajj Bourguiba as he fired a shot from his silver-butt rifle and shook his shoulders like a lone rooster in the coop, I had no tears at that moment, so I settled for the heartache and anguish that gripped my chest. Fatima was first in our class; she excelled in math, and I could never understand her repeated explanations to me—do letters have any place in the language of numbers? She spoke French with ease, and I owe my average grades in English to her.)) (Yabrir, 2013, p. 41). The narrator depicts and describes his relationship with others during his childhood — specifically with “Idris,” the woman closest to him, and with Saadi, his close friend. She was his savior during

his school days, and he dwells on her early marriage, which was typical for girls in the neighborhood at that time.

What distinguishes this novel and sets it apart from Nawar al-Luz's novel is its tracing of the protagonists' life stages and its examination of their relationships within the framework of the self and the other.

C) The Other: Place

Diyar al-Shams Neighborhood ----- Homeland

For the "self," the homeland is this neighborhood where he lives, bounded by the valley where he spent his childhood and youth; he knows no other homeland. Even if he leaves it, he leaves with his body, but his spirit remains in this neighborhood. He says: "Ever since I returned to Diyar al-Shams, I have not met myself, for ever since I left it before, I was not with myself." (Yabrir, 2013, p. 23).

Thus, the residents of the "Land of the Sun" neighborhood were alive, yet as if dead due to their harsh living conditions—caused by the arbitrariness of the rulers, bureaucracy, and marginalization—much like the people of Al-Bararik in the novel *Nawar Al-Luz*.

Features of the "Black Decade" in the novel:

The novel *The Madman's Will* is set in the 1980s and early 1990s, the period of the "Black Decade" and the ordeal the country endured. This is illustrated in the novel by the words of Idris: : "Perhaps many want to label me a terrorist simply because I pray at the mosque on Fridays and attend Maghrib and Isha prayers there—a label I would gladly bear in Tihi, our neighborhood, where a beard causes such a stir that the stares of others force you to trim it day by day until you're clean-shaven... but the labels of 'terrorist,' 'religious,' 'Sufi,' 'madman,' and 'intelligence agent' were all one and the same, and I embodied that label as a collection of anomalies)) (Yabrir, 2013, p. 53). This "self," which represented the devout man during that period, became confused about his beliefs and fell into a state of doubt; for in this difficult phase, correct religious concepts became mixed with others, and the dividing lines disappeared, The characters belong to a neighborhood rife with ignorance and superstition, where it is easy to mislead and manipulate them, despite their adherence to religious instruction in the kuttab and prayer in the mosques.

Then there is the other enemy—the religious extremist during the "Black Decade"—who was once a friend but became an enemy once his intentions became clear. Many young people in the neighborhood, including "Idris," embraced these ideas because of their idleness and marginalization; for them, there is no difference between night and day, and they have no sense of time. Idleness is destructive to youthful energy, leading to despair and frustration.

The Other Enemy ----- The Religiously Different:

The narrator refers to them through the Christian and Jewish cemeteries, in contrast to the Muslim cemetery. There is no religiously different "other" in this novel except for what "I, Idris" mentions about the Jewish cemetery and the priest. He says, "They all have long stories about the Jews, even though they never lived in our neighborhood. All I know is that Father Abdulrahman, the only Christian priest in the city, was, to me, a Jew." However, the entire novel tells the story of "the other" from the perspective of "us"—those of the same religion—despite the prevalence of sorcery, superstitions, and distorted traditions.

We conclude from these two novels that the nature of the “other” is determined by the nature of the encounter with them and the nature of the need for them. The “self” has thus become tied to a particular perspective; consequently, it can be defined in absolute terms, and the “other” is, in turn, a partner, a companion, an enemy, an individual, or a group. This compels us to ask once again: **“What is the Algerian writer seeking to achieve by raising the dialectic of the self and the other in his writings?”** Is he attempting to formulate a new vision that facilitates engagement with the other? Or does he intend to strip the “self” bare and lay it bare before itself within a sphere defined by the other?

In conclusion:

From this research paper, we draw the following conclusions:

- Postcolonial theory is an anti-colonial theory that emerged as a response to and a means of undermining the effects of the colonial process on cultures and societies; it is attributed to the thinker Edward Said.
- Scholars agree that postcolonial studies took shape with Edward Said’s book **Orientalism**.
- Postcolonial theory is a theory that opposes intellectual and cultural colonial hegemony, exposes the distortion of facts, and works to restore the East’s reputation through counter-Orientalism.
- The primary objectives of postcolonial discourse are to analyze colonial discourse and to reveal the extent of the interplay between culture and colonialism.
- Cultural colonialism, through the use of Orientalist writings, is another form of central imperialism.
- Postcolonial literature focuses on writing about the colonial experience, exposing its realities, and conveying the voices of these nations to the outside world.
- The Algerian postcolonial novel began with the writings of Muhammad Dib, written in the language of the colonizer, and focused on exploring the dialectic of “the self and the other.”
- Al-Tahir Wattar’s novel **Al-Laz** is considered one of the foundational works of postcolonial Arabic fiction.
- The term “identity” became widely used in Algerian fiction due to its importance in raising issues affecting the Algerian individual and in breaking free from colonial subjugation.
- The concept of identity is linked more to the ideological dimension than to the scientific one, given that an individual’s identity can be expressed through religion, language, homeland, and culture.
- The novel derives its value from its connection to the social context.
- In their novels, Algerian writers have raised questions of identity, thereby introducing a new concept of the self and the other.
- At the end of the second millennium, Algerian novels sought to highlight the relationship between the self and the other.
- Most postcolonial novels have described the relationship between the self and the other.
- The “other” may be someone who is religiously or linguistically different, or a local “other.”

- The discourse has come to focus on conflicting forms of the self.

Post-independence Algerian novels have addressed all aspects of social, economic, and political life, beginning with the legacy of colonialism and moving through all the events Algeria has experienced, as well as their impact on society and the individual. Most of these novels have explored the repercussions of these events on the individual's life and their view of themselves and others— and this “other” is not always someone who differs in religion, language, or culture; rather, the most influential “other” is found within the homeland itself and is a creation of the Western “other.”

Thus, the identity conflict may be an ethnic conflict—a conflict of belonging in its narrowest sense.

It may be a negative conflict: within a single state among religious sects and ethnic and political affiliations, which gives rise to wars over power and the economy. It is a political, economic, and cultural conflict (cultural and ethnic affiliation serving as a pretext for gaining control).

A positive conflict: to assert oneself and defend religious and cultural identity in the face of the clash of civilizations between independent and colonized nations.

The quest to assert identity through conflict between nations and civilizations may take the form of a conflict between religions and cultures, aimed at reclaiming past glories, expanding territory, and searching for lost empires.

The conflict may also occur within a single state in the pursuit of identity.

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